



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
2/17/2017

GOVERNOR'S H.B. 7027: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR. Specifically regarding the budget for Department of Housing

Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Kathy Flaherty and I'm the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order which mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community. I'm also the Vice Chair of the Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP). KTP is a coalition of advocates (people living with mental health conditions, family members, mental health professionals and interested community members) with a vision of a state in which people with mental health conditions are able to live successfully in the community because they have access to housing and other community-based supports and services that are recovery oriented, person-driven and holistic in their approach to wellness. Lastly, I'm a member of the steering committee of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance (an alliance of people of all ages with all disabilities who pursue a unified agenda).

1

I am submitting this statement in support of the Governor's budget with regard to continued investments in housing. Everyone in Connecticut deserves safe, decent, and affordable housing in the community of their choice.

The Governor's proposed budget includes \$72.7 million in the DOH Housing and Homelessness line. I urge you to preserve this funding for frontline homeless services, outreach, shelter and the

rental assistance program. Connecticut has made massive strides in addressing homelessness, particularly for veterans and those who fit the definition of chronic homelessness.

Investing resources so that we can connect people to services as quickly as possible, either to prevent homelessness or permit people to return to stable housing, will ultimately save the state money.

Homeless youth are a vulnerable population who need appropriate services so that they can move on from a time of crisis and transition successfully to adulthood. I encourage you to preserve the \$2.3 million line item for homeless youth services.

These investments in housing cannot be looked at in a vacuum and I will be back next week to testify at the DMHAS public hearing about the proposed investments there which will impact the ability of people to access housing and remain in housing. If you are on social media, I encourage you to check out the hashtag #WhatHousingMeansToMe, on which Connecticut residents are sharing their thoughts about what housing means to them.

Thank you.